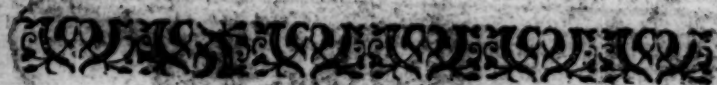




Dr. *MILNER*'s
FAST SERMON.



DECEMBER 2

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1821

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V I R T U E ^{1112. e 16}
The Basis of Publick Happiness. ²

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED

On Occasion of the GENERAL-FAST,

A T

PECKHAM in SURRY,

JANUARY 7, 1746-7.

By JOHN MILNER, D.D. K

Vincit amor patriae —————

VIRG. ÆN. VI. 823.

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 PROV. xiv. 34.

*Righteousness exalteth a nation: But
sin is the reproach of any people.*

NO one can be ignorant of the force of self-interest, when it takes up so much of our thoughts, and we are continually designing the means of its increase and security. There is one way of doing this, not so commonly thought of, though perhaps more effectual than some others, I mean the encouraging *Publick Virtue*. For our personal interest and happiness have a necessary and unavoidable connection with the publick state of things, and consequently the prosperity of the *one* must give so much advantage and security to the *other*.

If we desire our private Schemes of interest should succeed, we should equally desire that the publick welfare might be established: But if, on the contrary, we promote publick evils and disorders, and perhaps may gain by them; in the end such a conduct must turn to our greater prejudice. He that is injurious to his Country, is

really injurious to himself; to his innocence, to his reputation, to the stability of his fortune and family. The love of our Country therefore should be the predominant affection in us, because it really involves in it all others of a private nature.

Publick Happiness is now the object to engage us. We are to humble ourselves before God for our sins, that he might lift us up; to implore his protection and blessing on our national affairs, during the present war. That I might cherish the dispositions becoming us on this occasion, I cannot do better, than point out that object, which has a direct influence and tendency to promote publick happiness, and that is VIRTUE. Virtue makes men Noble, Friendly, and Useful; secures the most favourable conjunctures; strengthens all the bands of society; and perpetuates the happy fruits of our labour and toil to after generations.

This, I conceive, to be the truth contained in this Aphorism of Wisdom, *righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is the reproach of any people*, i. e. Religion and Virtue have a direct influence on publick happiness; to exalt a nation by increasing its strength at home, and credit abroad: But Vice has a quite different tendency, viz. to bring a Nation into reproach; into weakness, contempt and ruin. Upon this Principle the wise man adds a very useful instruction to Kings, in the following verse; *The King's favour is towards a wise servant: But his wrath is against him that causeth shame*, i. e. a good Prince will always encourage a virtuous Ministry, and never suffer vice to share in his authority and administration.

The word *righteousness* in Scripture sometimes signifies the mercy and goodness of God; sometimes the

the particular virtue of justice in man; but in other passages it has a more extensive sense. It signifies the same as moral rectitude, or such a temper and conduct as are right; agreeable to the reason of things, and the will of God. It comprehends in it, Justice, Equity, Truth, Fidelity, Peace, Love, the acknowledgment and veneration of God, and whatever else is included in the notion of Holiness, and Natural Piety. I need not stay to prove this to be its meaning here, when *Sin* is put in contrast to it, *i. e.* injustice, fraud, and all kinds of debauchery.—The design of the text is to instruct us, *that Virtue is the basis of publick happiness.* In support of this truth my design is

- I. To shew what those things are which exalt a Nation.
- II. . . . To prove, that Religion and Virtue will generally have this effect.
- III. . . . To observe, what motive is here offered to engage us to act on this principle, namely, the preventing our reproach.

I shall speak distinctly to each of those heads, and conclude with some suitable reflections on the subject.

I. . . . I am to shew what those things are, which exalt a nation, and constitute publick happiness; which make us easy at home and respected abroad; which really increase our strength, and give weight to all our councils and measures: And they are, I conceive, these following.

- 1.) *An happy Constitution of Government.* Wherein the welfare, peace, and safety of the Governed is the *Supreme Law*, and the force of the Commu-

Community is directed to this as its *Ultimate End*.² This undoubtedly is the end of all Society, and therefore ought to be the principal Object of all Government. And where it is so, the satisfaction, honour and dignity of Governors will be equally great, admired and secure.

Whatever *Form* things are thrown into, or by what hands soever government is administered, (and we must expect they should be different, according to men's different sentiments, inclinations and interests; and according to the various events, which affected the rise and progress of their State: Yet I say whatever form they take) if the publick welfare be the principal object of attention; and reason and law the invariable rule of conduct, that Constitution is well modelled; and it will be so much the better, the fewer inconveniencies and dangers it lies exposed to.

Men have, *it is true*, warm and interesting passions, but if they are only indulged to decent and lawful freedoms, they would easily coincide with every such constitution. The height of honour would be to be useful; the glory of Empire to defend mankind; the ambition and zeal of every member to pay a cheerful submission to government. But then as mens passions are apt to grow exorbitant, we shall find the love of riches, power, and dominion will many times endanger the publick safety.

To lodge the supreme power in the hands of *one*, and subject us to his will, is the dreadful form of slavery: To give a share to *all* must lead us into anarchy and confusion. That seems the happiest constitution of any other, that has in it a mixture

² Ollis (Sci. praetoribus, judicibus, consulibus,) salus populi suprema lex esto.

mixture of all ranks and pretensions, and such a moderate share of honourable and lucrative posts, as might reward the fidelity, vigilance and care of those, who devote themselves to the service of the Publick. I say a moderate share, because should they be multiplied too much, they would tempt men to be profuse or venal; to forget the Publick, or impoverish it; and either way publick ruin must be inevitable.

Men may be biassed by an honest partiality towards that Form of Government, they were born under; yet, I conceive, we have reason in saying, that ours is the best in the world, as it is a most equal and secure distribution of the Supreme Power into the hands of *King, Lords and Commons*. This constitutes neither a Monarchy, nor a Democracy; but such a mixed Legislature, as takes in all ranks; such a scheme of government as is wisely framed out of all others, and adopts what is good from each of them. Here the supreme power is measured out in such proportion, and with such effect, that each of the three Estates can put a negative on the proceedings of the other two. And consequently they have each such an independency, which ought to be preserved sacred and inviolable, that one part may be a proper check on the other, on any appearance of deviation from the publick good. In such a constitution no law can have force without the consent of all; and no ruin affect them without the same concurrence. If such a fabrick falls, it must be accomplished with our own hands, and I know nothing so likely to prepare for it as Bribery and Corruption.^b The People therefore, who have a right to chuse one of those Estates, should,

^b Vendidit hic auro patriam, dominumque potentem
Imposuit: fixit leges pretio atque refixit.

Virg. Æn. VI. 621.

should, whilst they are a free people, and happy in their Constitution, be ever jealous of this iniquity; be persuaded that every Bribe, given or taken, is a wrong motive of action, and a real approach to this detestable Parricide.

Thus happy are we in the frame of our government, where LAW, founded in reason, and publick benefit, is the universal rule to Governors and Governed. Thus are we exalted above all other nations of the Earth^c.

2.) *A due Execution of laws exalteth a nation.* The best constitution in the world, and the completest body of laws would be of no signification or benefit, unless they operated on proper occasions. In society not only good laws must be made, but a power to enforce the observance of them; a power that shall give the apprehension of greater Evil in transgressing the law, than, some may imagine, in obeying it. By this means the regard which men have to their own interest, safety, and life, will effectually secure mine;

^c We have the concurring opinion of two very great men, *Cicero* and *Tacitus*, in favour of such a constitution as ours, before any other form of Government. Though the Historian thought it an happiness rather to be admired and wished for, than obtained, and that, could it be obtained, it would not last long. But our Experience has hitherto confuted his judgment, and we hope, as the most complete is the most likely to continue, that it will endure to the most distant ages.

Statuo esse optimè constitutam rempublicam, quae ex tribus generibus illis, regali, optimo, et populari confusa modicè, nec puniendo irriter animum immanem ac ferum; nec omnia praetermittendo, licentia cives deteriores reddat.

Cic. de repub. l. II. frag.

Nam cunctas nationes et urbes populus, aut primores, aut singuli regunt: delecta ex his, et constituta reipublicae forma, laudari facilius quam evenire, vel si evenit, haud diuturna esse potest.

Tacit. ann. IV. 33.

mine; and the fear of punishment be a perpetual restraint to the excesses of passion.

Magistrates are therefore appointed to give life and activity to the Constitution. They are to apply that share of power intrusted with them for the administration of justice, and the preservation of publick peace and order; for enforcing the obligation of contracts; repressing the violence of anger; and punishing the disorderly and vicious.

Laws are made for those salutary purposes, as St. Paul observes, *not for the righteous, to condemn and punish them; but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly, and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers, and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men-stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing contrary to sound doctrine*^d. Laws are to protect and encourage those, who do well, and to terrify evil doers; but if they are not applied to those purposes, they are a dead letter^e. If men are left to follow their corrupt desires and passions without shame, fear, or restraint, all things must run into confusion, and every man would be the judge and executioner of his own resentments.

When a strict discipline is preserved; when the laws are revered, and vice has no countenance from authority, all things go well, and every man pursues his duty and interest without disturbance.

B

^d 1 Tim. i. 9, 10.

^e Quid enim est jus civile? Quod neque inflecti gratia, neque perfringi potentia, neque adulterari pecunia possit. Quod si non modo oppressum, sed etiam desertum, aut negligentius adservatum erit; nihil est, quod quisquam sese habere certum, aut a patre accepturum, aut relicturum liberis arbitretur.

Cic. orat. pro Caecin. 26.

sturbance. The face of things will be all serene, and the business of life a pleasure.

3.) *A firm and settled union exalts a nation.* And this consists in a general concurrence of all heads and hearts to promote the publick welfare. Though men have different wills and interests, yet when those are conducted in subserviency to a general interest; when men are ready to abate their pretensions, and recede a little from private right to secure the main stake, then they are a well compact body, and must carry some weight into all their resolutions and measures.

We have lately seen what it is for men, in a common danger, to unite into one concern and endeavour for their defence. The same disposition should prevail in the ordinary course of things. The variety of mens tempers is perfectly consistent with such an union, because they are led to this center by the very same publick spirit. An union or friendship that is not conducted by this spirit, deserves not the name of any virtue; but is a faction, a conspiracy, a seditious combination of men, because it is injurious to that, which ought to be the constant object of our affection and zeal, *viz. Publick Good.*

In such a state of Union all things move regularly on, and the force of the Community is kept more entire to the discouragement of imbred factions and foreign invasions*; and consequently such a nation must be exalted.

4.) A

* This union was of the greatest advantage to us, when the *Spaniards* invaded us, as a *French* Historian observes. “The dreadful Armada did not find the *English* either lulled asleep by the vain treaties of Peace, with which the council of *Spain* sought to amuse them; or divided among themselves about Religion; or terrified by that enormous force, of which the *Spaniards* had made their boast, seconded with

“ the

4.) *A prosperous course of Trade* must exalt a nation, as it gives it a distinction and importance amongst other nations. When all heads and hands are employed to improve our own commodities; and, by an home consumption, or foreign exportation, enlarge the conveniencies of life, every thing is in a right state. Every one has his proper business and work; no hands are idle, and every one shares in the returns of Profit.

A fraudulent clandestine trade, such I mean as is not subject to the necessary taxes and impositions of Government, must produce the worst consequences. It bids defiance to laws, in the same manner as treason and rebellion do; it assaults the life and power of fair dealing, and straitens the subsistence of the industrious poor: And if at the same time it carries both money and intelligence to our most determined Enemies, every one must feel the mischief of this Evil, and consequently must think, that it cannot be too soon or too severely suppressed.

On the contrary when the fruits of industry, art, and science are duly encouraged, and protected; and an easy circulation of business obtains, all ranks and degrees of men will find their account in it. Every thing will flourish, and the nation make new acquisitions of wealth and power, *and those will command respect.*

5. And lastly; *the firm and full possession of Liberty will exalt a nation.* Liberty implies freedom of action, or a power of disposing our persons, properties and enjoyments, agreeable to our own sentiments and choice, without being hindered

B 2

or

“ the fulminations of Pope *Sixtus* against Queen *Elizabeth*:
 “ But all perfectly united together, all firmly determined and
 “ well prepared, to defend the honour of the *Generous Queen*,
 “ and the *Liberty* of their native Country.” — *Mexceray.*

or controled by any. Not that this is a boundless license to act in all respects as we please, or to indulge our desires and passions whatever they are. This would introduce confusion on many occasions, and really endanger the publick safety. I know of no power, call it supreme or subordinate, but what is necessarily limited by the reason and fitness of things; and therefore our sentiments and choices must be supposed in this argument to be reasonable.

It is a Liberty subject to reason that is the privilege of rational creatures; and it is a Liberty subject to law, that is the glory of *Britains*^f. And as in the *one* case, reason is supposed to be rightly informed; so in the *other*, law is supposed to be founded in justice and equity.

This legal Liberty exalts a nation, as it gives security and protection to our Persons, Properties and Religion, which all men naturally desire^g.——When we are free from pains, imprisonments, and the fear of death, unless we have deserved either; when, in cases where life is put in danger by the imputation of crimes, we are admitted to a fair and open trial; and, as with us, our peers are our judges, *i. e.* such as are of our own rank and condition, and are supposed to know best the nature and circumstances of the fact in question. This is a noble privilege, and protects a man from the resentment and partiality of his superiors.——When we enjoy our properties without being liable to unknown and

^f Vos, quorum gratia in suffragiis consistit, libertas in legibus, honos in judiciis et aequitate magistratus, et res familiares in pace, omni ratione otium tenere debetis.

Cic. de leg. agr. II. 37.

^g Omnes autem homines naturâ libertati studere, et conditionem servitutis odisse.

Caes. b. IX. 3, 10.

and illegal impositions; when we can call them our own, and dispose of them as we please; when we can thus enjoy the fruits of our labour and leave them as an inheritance to our Children, or to such uses as charity and piety shall suggest: Then we enjoy a great advantage, and experience tells us, that the certainty of property always enhances its price and value^h.—Liberty in Religion includes in it a right to form our sentiments of it from the word of God; and to profess it in a method suitable to the dictates of our own conscience. On the favour of God depends our present and future happiness, and nothing can be more reasonable than that we should serve and worship Him in that way we apprehend most pleasing to him. But then it is equally reasonable that we should give the government we live under unquestionable proofs of our duty and affection; and shall certainly do it, unless we make sedition, rebellion, and the violation of Faith parts of our Religion, as the Papists do, when it is for the advancement of the Catholic cause.

When we can use this right without being subject to force and compulsion; when our profession results not from fear, but choice; not from a dread of penal laws, but a sense of duty and obligation, then we enjoy the most valuable privilege,

^h My Lord *Molesworth* in his account of *Denmark*, Ch. VI, VII, VIII. observes, that by the Peoples rash surrender of their liberties to the King, and the investiture of him with an hereditary and absolute dominion; the real value of lands sunk more than half, every property became precarious, and the ruin of publick liberty was completed, by uniting in its stead two of the most insupportable evils, poverty and slavery. A standing caution to *Britains* against partiality, jealousy and discontent, which suggested this sudden revolution, and accomplished it in four days. *Pauci prudentiâ honesta ab deterioribus, utilia ab noxiis discernunt; plures aliorum eventis docentur.*

vilege, worth a living or dying for. And the Nations, who have preserved the most inviolable those rights of conscience, have increased most in strength and glory; in trade and riches; in peace and security. Men have ever the greatest aversion to restraints in those things; no tyranny so hateful as that over the conscience; no slavery so abject and mean as that of the mind in the service of God, and therefore men have been always ready to fly from such an infamous servitudeⁱ.

Those

ⁱ Principles of liberty seem so very clear in themselves, and to be so friendly to all the interests of mankind, that one would think great and good men should not disapprove of them: Yet they were never thoroughly understood till after the *Revolution*, i. e. not till we had made some experiments of the tendency of slavish principles, even to the hazard of our Constitution and Religion. All Parties amongst us have, when uppermost, pretended to direct and compel the consciencies of others. This shews that power is a dangerous temptation to human weakness, and that it is difficult to possess it and not abuse it. Since that happy *Æra*, Liberty has appeared in all her charms; and if those are not pleased with it, who have other views than peace, truth and righteousness, we need not be surprized. Liberty composes and quiets the minds of men in their highest concerns, and would give no disturbance to publick peace, or private friendships. — We in this Kingdom have seen and felt so much of its happy effect on trade, that we must be very perverse and prejudiced not to acknowledge it. *Norwich* is said to be in so little esteem in *Queen Elizabeth's* time, that it was debated in Council whether it should not be demolished, as being a receptacle of vagrants and idle persons, dangerous to government. But *D'Alva's* persecution and cruelty in the low countries forced the *Flemins* to fly to us for protection. And having permission to settle here and at *Colchester*, and liberty of worshipping God according to their consciences, they set up their manufactures, and have been ever since so considerable for their trade and riches. The *French Refugees* have found an Asylum amongst us, a quiet and safe retreat from persecution, and they have brought with them some useful manufactures. I might have illustrated this argument from our own History further, by shewing what immense mischief persecution has always procured to our commerce.

I shall

Those are the things which exalt a nation according to the estimation of temporal greatness and power. Thus happy are we in those nations, where liberty flourishes and property is secure; where we have the free Exercise of Religion. —Religion our noblest property, and our richest possession. —I proceed

II. To prove *that Religion and Virtue will contribute to this effect*; or have a tendency thus to exalt a nation and promote publick happiness. In support of this I shall offer these considerations, which, taken together, will, I conceive, amount to a satisfactory proof of what I intend.

1. . . God's moral government of the world.
2. . . The natural tendency of things.
3. . . The constant experience of Mankind.

Before I enter on those heads, I must beg leave to explain what I mean by Religion and Virtue in this argument, that we might not use words without any certain and determinate sense, and by that means leave the subject liable to misconstruction or censure.

By Religion and Virtue then I mean the same as moral goodness. Such as results from the true fear of God, and love of man; from the exercise of reason, and those kind and social affections, which constitute our moral nature; such, finally, as appears in the practice of justice, fidelity, truth, peaceableness, temperance, &c. which are the firm bands of union and society. This is what I mean here by Religion and Virtue.

Civil

I shall conclude with observing that *Holland*, that has ever been the refuge of the oppressed for conscience sake, hath risen, from the villages and huts of fishermen, to magnificent cities, to High and Mighty States. So it will always be, national happiness will enlarge itself in proportion to Publick Liberty.

Civil Government, I apprehend, takes cognizance of human actions in no other view than as they are prejudicial to Society, and, perhaps, considers no further their vitiosity and immorality. And therefore when we speak of Religion and Virtue in relation to Government, we must confine the notion of it to such things, as fall within its proper sphere. As for any particular form, and mode of profession, we see men differ in their sentiments about them; and will do so, whilst they are men, and have a natural unalienable right to judge for themselves. Neither can I apprehend any bad consequences likely to proceed from hence. If men sincerely endeavour to know and do the will of God, we must in charity hope and believe, they will be acceptable to God, and consequently ought not to be subject to the censure and anger of men, on account of such differences.

Variety has its beauty in the moral world as well as natural. All centering in God as the end; all conspiring to exalt his perfections, though in different ways, must give things an agreeable appearance, as they all result from principle. Whereas the same, constant, uniform face of things may, possibly, produce dulness, and inattention. Religion, possibly, in this dress might degenerate into a lifeless form, and, if compelled, into a hateful hypocrisy.

Nor will it follow from hence, that then all forms and professions are indifferent, and a man might make his choice of any in the dark. No — He is obliged to examine carefully the grounds he goes upon; he is to judge uprightly and impartially in the choice he makes for himself; he must guard against that peculiar frame and disposition of mind, which betrays men into errors. If after all this he should be mistaken, I cannot believe

believe such mistake will affect his interest in the favour of God; because he is supposed to do his best, and certainly a merciful God requires no more. Now, that, which will not prejudice him in God's favour, ought not in man's, *i. e.* he ought not to be restrained in professing his religion agreeable to the dictates of his own reason, and conscience.

I durst not, in relation to Civil Government, extend the notion of Religion and Virtue beyond moral goodness, lest I should give countenance to persecution. I am persuaded the Civil Magistrate has authority to command, and enforce moral good, because necessary to human Society. But should we extend the notion of Religion here to take in the profession of it, in this or the other form, or even Christianity itself, I think it must follow as an unavoidable consequence, that we must be all of the Magistrates Religion, and profess it in that way he prescribes, because he has a right to require what is necessary to human Society, *i. e.* we must admit of a publick conscience, and a publick leading in Religion, from which no one ought to differ. We must be Papist or Protestant, &c. as we happen to fall under different Establishments. And so unawares by such an extensive notion, we shall put all Religions on an equal foot, and countenance the iniquity and violence of persecution.

By Religion and Virtue then, on this subject, I mean the same as moral goodness; the natural duties we owe to God, ourselves, and one another. And I must observe with regard to those, that there is not such variety in mens sentiments; and yet they are of so much importance as to coincide with the ultimate views of Christianity itself; and really constitute the life of Faith, and the image of God in

the soul of Man^k.—Now that Religion and Virtue, in this sense, have a tendency to promote publick happiness will appear

FIRST—from God's moral Government of Mankind. That there is a Providence I must now take for granted, as a principle contradicted by none, who pretend to any principles. *The Lord reigneth let the Earth rejoice: Let the multitude of Isles be glad thereof*¹. His Government will be like himself holy, just, and good: Consequently those who act righteously must be the objects of his favour, and those who act wickedly, of his displeasure. And since Government without retributions, or a power to reward and punish, would be

* It may be proper here to obviate their prejudice, who have fixed a wrong idea to the word *Morality*, as if it meant no more than common honesty, or fair dealing. This is only a single branch of it, and confines the notion of it too much. *Morality* is the knowledge or rule of Manners; of that conduct and behaviour which we are capable of discovering by the exercise of our rational faculties. This is of so extensive a meaning as to take in all the duties of Natural Religion; such as we owe to God, ourselves, and one another. In the Prophets language it is *to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God*, Mic. vi. 8. In the Apostles, *to live soberly, righteously, and godly*, Tit. ii. 12. This is called the *law written in the heart*, Rom. ii. 15. *the law of the mind*, Rom. vii. 23.—In this sense has been generally understood the word *Morality*. The rule which God at first revealed to man for his obedience was the *Moral Law*. The sum, or principal heads, of this law is comprehended in the *Ten Commandments*. Vid. Assembly's Catechism, quest 40, 41. Our Saviour has given us a further abridgement of it, in *Matt. xxii. 37,—40.* and a large exposition of it in his Sermon on the Mount, *Matt. ch. v. 6, 7.* Whoever considers thus the extent and excellency of *Moral Goodness*, cannot allow himself to speak of it with the least contempt. It is of the same force with that *Holiness*, which is so much the design of Christianity; and when wrought into the frame and temper of the Soul is the proper resemblance of God himself, the rectitude and perfection of every *Good Man*.

¹ Psal. xcvi. 1.

be no more than an image of greatness to be contemned. Therefore it is reasonable to suppose, that God in his righteous providence should manifest himself, and treat men according to the nature of their actions, in one period of their existence or other.

Societies, as such, have only an existence in this world, and therefore if they are judged at all, as such, it must be in this life. There is a tribunal to be erected in the other world, before which all men must be convened, and *every one give an account of himself to God^m*. Individuals may be reserved to the decisions of that important day. God may suffer them to subsist here, the objects of his patience and long-suffering, and meet with them hereafter to reckon for their misdeeds. But Political Societies, not existing beyond this world, must be judged here or not at all.

Nations, and Kingdoms, in respect to one another, may be considered as individuals. The same Political Society will subsist, so long as the same constitution of laws, privileges, customs, and language subsists; which may be through a succession of ages. I cannot pretend to assign the period of their existence, it may be longer or shorter, but, whatever that be, it is reasonable to believe, that it should receive the marks of divine favour or displeasure; from whence it might be acknowledged, *that there is a God who judgeth in the earthⁿ*. It is perfectly agreeable to the wisdom and justice of God, that a righteous nation should prosper, and a wicked one be reduced and punished, as well as single persons. There is a remarkable analogy between his proceedings with one and the other. They have each their trials, and space for repentance. God

C 2

bares

^m Rom. xiv. 12. 2. Cor. v. 10.

ⁿ Psal. lviii. 11.

bare long with Societies as well as single persons to render them more inexcusable, and increase the weight of his vengeance °.

We make no difficulty of applying to nations the moral character, calling *one* wise, frugal, industrious, just, generous, and brave; *another* the contrary. *One* is remarkable for the veneration of God, the strict regard to publick faith; *another* is impious, vain, and perfidious. The *one* consequently will be hateful to God, the *other* pleasing: and each may expect that his dispensations will be in proportion to such Characters.

A Kingdom founded in blood and violence, raised upon the ruins of publick liberty, may be suffered to prosper a long period, and for this reason, among others, to be a scourge to its neighbours, whose sins have deserved it, and whose fate is impending. When God has thus made one nation the instrument of his anger and the rod of his displeasure to another, he may give it, in its turn, and according to its deserts a taste of his righteous judgments. He may make one subsist, till he has executed his pleasure by it; but if then that nation repents not, its power shall be broken, its glory veiled, its plagues many; and he cannot want another instrument for this vengeance.

From all which it is reasonable to conclude that a righteous nation is in the fairest way to prosper, as it must be interested in the divine favour and protection. In the care of one, who has all nature obedient to his will; who can throw every favourable event in their way, to recover their expiring liberties, to enlarge their languishing

° Consueſſe enim Deos immortales quo gravius homines ex commutatione rerum doleant, quos pro ſcelere eorum ulgiſci velint, his ſecundiores interdum res, et diuturniorem impunitatem concedere,

Caef. b. ix. 1. 12.

languishing commerce, or establish their tranquillity and peace.— On the other hand a wicked people have every thing to fear from God. He can defeat their wisdom, embarrass their affairs, and reduce them to a state of confusion, weakness and contempt. *There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord. The horse is prepared against the day of Battle; but safety is of the Lord*^{p. q. d.} “No human design, “ foresight, or management can oppose divine “ providence. For though the use of means is “ in the power of man, yet all events are only “ in the hand of God.”

Less than this cannot be inferred from God's government of the world, that virtue should exalt a nation, and Sin be the reproach of a people; because publick happiness really depends upon many kind aspects of divine Providence. *Except the Lord keep the City, the watchman waketh but in vain*^{q.}

SECONDLY—The same truth results from the nature of things themselves. Our wise Creator has not wholly left us to the reflections of cool reason in our enquiries after happiness; because those would not be always sufficient to controul the effort of strong desires and passions, especially when they are so apt to be raised and inflamed by sudden occasions. God has been therefore pleased to order such a constitution of things, that generally *virtue* should be attended with some degree of pleasure; and *vice*, with some degree of pain. He would teach wisdom by experience, and convince us of the unchangeable differences of things by what we see, and feel in their different effects.—But give me leave to be more particular here.

1.) Vir-

^p Prov. xxi. 30, 31.

^q Psal. cxxvii. 1.

1.) Virtue, actuated by a sense of God's being and providence, *lays an obligation upon conscience, when other authorities will not influence.* In some cases laws are silent, and have made no determinations about them. In other cases laws are distant, and their power will not reach, where it is not feared. We see every day, that secrecy, and hope of impunity, embolden men to commit many crimes. But when virtue is formed into the temper of the soul, and every kind and social affection prompts it; when conscience acts with authority, and the awe of a Supreme Being controuls the unlawful desire and wish, that person will be the same in all places, and every where yield to the obligation of doing well^r.

Those are principles that will guard the avenues of the mind, and oppose every sudden temptation. They will rise up and lie down with us; they will stay and travel with us; and exert their authority, whether we are in solitude, or a crowd. Virtue therefore so agreeable to the law of our minds, and enforced by its authority, must always excite us to a rectitude of life and manners, and consequently be always favourable to the interests of society.

2.) *Particular virtues have each a share in contributing to publick happiness.* They shed an happy influence on one part or other, such as will procure sound health and firmness to the body political; for instance,

Chastity,

^r O'erunt peccare boni virtutis amore:

Tu nihil admittes in te formidine poenæ.

Sit spes fallendi, miscebis sacra prophanis.

Hor. Ep. 1. 16. 52.

Chastity, temperance, and self-denial, contribute to health and satisfaction: the contrary not only depress and darken the mind, but bring infirmities and distempers on the body, and some of such an inveterate malignity, as to contaminate the blood to the third generation.

Frugality, industry, and labour, are the natural sources of plenty: the contrary tend to want. Luxury will cherish pride, vanity and idleness; and those will certainly effeminate a people, the consequence of which must be, they will have less attention to business, be less able to endure fatigues and hardships, and in the end their manufactures must decay.

Truth, fidelity and justice raise men's esteem and credit, and create amongst them mutual love and confidence: the contrary violate those sacred ties; fill every place with uneasy jealousies and reserves; deprive men of many great advantages and encouragements in improving their fortunes, and fill the world with treachery and violence.

Meekness, patience, and humility are ever studious of peace, and leave other men room to exercise their talents and abilities: the contrary give a loose to anger, strife, hatred, detraction, &c. which never fail to introduce confusion, and every other evil work.

Fortitude, unanimity, and the love of our country, are the constant guardians of liberty. and impregnable bulwarks against foreign invasions: the contrary cherish factions and tumults, and expose us to weakness and contempt.

Benevolence is the source of both publick and private virtues, and he that is endowed with it will pass through the world with esteem, admiration, and success: but the contrary disposes men
to

to be diffident, various, and ever attentive to popular murmurs and discontents.

Virtues so equitable, generous, and full of humanity, must have in them a natural efficacy towards procuring the conveniencies and pleasures of life; promoting peace and order; and restraining men from being injurious to themselves or others: and consequently the riches, strength, and glory of kingdoms, must rise or fall in proportion to their operation and influence.

3.) Virtue has a natural tendency to publick happiness, *as it keeps in view the great ends of society amongst all ranks of men.* The ends of society are not only to secure our persons and properties from violence; but to give us an opportunity of enlarging the comforts of life by social communications, and an exchange of good offices. Where virtue reigns, it will pay an inviolable regard to those ends, and that both in governors and governed; and consequently that society must be in the most prosperous condition, which keeps closest to those ends.—For instance,

The Governors of Society under the influence of Virtue, will make it their principal care, *that the Publick receive no detriment*; that they use their authority well, without passion or partiality; for the Peoples good, rather than their own*. They would account it the glory of their administration

* Ne quid respublica detrimenti caperet.

Cic. or. pro Mil. 26.

Cicero, who understood well the nature and obligation of publick characters, tells us, “ that Governors should adhere
“ to Plato’s two precepts: *First*, to make the safety and interest of their subjects their chief aim in all their administrations, without considering their own personal advantage. *Secondly*, so to take care of the whole, as not to
“ serve the interest of one party, to the prejudice of the rest.
“ For the government of a state, is much like the office of a guardian;

tion to defend the rights of mankind, and to be really great by being useful. From virtuous governors we should have no schemes of arbitrary power; no oppressive taxes, only to support luxury, pomp, or the wantonness of ambition. They would be contented with a limited power; a power to do all the good they could, but none to do mischief. This is as much power as any wise or good man would desire; and more, a bad man ought never to have. Virtue will always raise authority, and command respect and veneration; much more in such elevated stations. Virtue will add lustre to a crown, and grace to majesty, and stability to a throne; for where that was, there would be equity, moderation, and a publick spirit, equally the objects of love and admiration.

The governed under the influence of virtue would give as substantial proofs of their regard to their Country. They would approve themselves, by a cheerful obedience to laws; by a just and peaceable deportment; by a detestation of faction, sedition, and rebellion. They would invade no man's right; disturb no man's peace; always guide themselves by this equitable and fair measure of *doing to others, as they would*

others

“ guardian; which should be managed for the good of the
 “ Trust, rather than of the Trustee. Those who consult the
 “ interest of one part of the Citizens to the neglect of an-
 “ other, do but make way for sedition and discord, de-
 “ structive to all communities.” — Omnino qui reipublicae
 praefuturi sunt, duo Platonis praecepta teneant. Unum, ut
 utilitatem civium sic tueantur, ut, quaecunque agunt, ad eam
 referant, obliti commodorum suorum. Alterum, ut totum
 corpus reipublicae curent; ne, dum partem aliquam tuentur,
 reliquas deserant. Ut enim tutela, sic procuratio reipublicae
 ad utilitatem eorum, qui commissi sunt; non ad eorum, qui-
 bus commissa est, gerenda est. Qui autem parti civium con-
 sultunt, partem negligunt, rem perniciosissimam in civitatem
 inducunt, seditionem atque discordiam. Cic. off. I. 25.

others should do to them. By a steady adherence to virtue, their loyalty and duty would spring from lasting principles; not from a fear of laws, not a dread of punishment, which would have no effect, when we thought ourselves out of danger; but from a love of virtue and publick happiness. We should submit to government, *not only for wrath, but conscience sake*[†].

Consider thus the natural tendency and influence of virtue, and it will appear in favour of publick happiness. It will sweeten mens tempers; bound their passions, and give a kind, generous, and happy turn to every part and member of the Constitution.

THIRDLY — This proposition is not only true *in reason, but Fact and Experience*. The History of all ages confirms this, that it is not only something which may be, but has been: So that we can say of all the great Empires that are fallen, they were first corrupted before they were destroyed, and lost their Virtue before they lost their liberty and glory.

The *Jewish* nation is an instructive proof of this. So long as they hearkened to the voice of the Lord, and walked in his statutes and judgments, they were prosperous; but when they rebelled against him, they were corrected with one plague or other, and often given into the hands of their Enemies. Messengers and Prophets were continually sent to assure them of the care and blessings of Providence, whilst they continued in their duty; and that measures would be altered, on their different conduct. The vicissitudes and publick events, which affected this State, were strictly in proportion to this declared rule of the divine proceedings; till at length they filled

[†] Rom. xiii. 5.

filled up the measure of their iniquity, and brought on them that tremendous doom, which still they lye under.

It is a narrow notion, and unworthy the universal and righteous governor of the world, to imagine that he was partial in his favour to the *Jews*. The light communicated to them was designed for the benefit of all around them. The instructions, the warnings, they received, were to have a wider spread than the confines of *Judea*, and to be a standing testimony against the wickedness and idolatry of the other Nations. To this sense, I think, we ought in part to expound that famous promise to *Abrahm*, viz. *in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed*^u. The particular care, which God would take of him and his posterity; the peculiar covenant he would establish with them, were not to exclude the rest of mankind from mercy; but to preserve such a knowlege of God, and of true religion amongst this people, as might be an instruction to neighbouring nations. Their *moral* laws were to inspire them with a notion of probity and goodness; their *ceremonial*, so pompous and magnificent, to impress them with an awe of God; and though their neighbours were left to make their own reflections on those things, yet, I conceive, they had this effect to convince them, that there was a Being fit to be the object of worship; to be revered and feared in some way or other. So far the families of the Earth were immediately blessed in him; and both *Peter* and *Paul* afterwards, from this very promise, plead for the right of the *Gentiles*, it being originally intended in their favour, as well as the *Jews*^x. *In his name shall the Gentiles trust*^y.

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There

^u Gen. xii. 3. ^x Acts ii. 39. Gal. iii. 8. ^y Mat. xii. 21.

There is the more regard to be paid to this History, as, I conceive, it was designed to be a glass for reflecting the methods of God's dealings with nations. Others observing what this people enjoyed or suffered, in their temporal interests, answerable to their moral character, might easily learn what they had to fear or hope for, from the same righteous Being. The perfections of God are unalterable, and the same wisdom and goodness, which governed the *Jews*, governed all the rest of mankind. His measures cannot be different with different nations, any further than to make allowance for the different advantages they enjoy; for the same justice must lie at the foundation of all his dispensations.

We see from this history, that Sin is a thing, which greatly displeases God; which prevents the tokens of his favour, and separates good things from a people. We see that he tried various methods to recover them to their duty. Sometimes he expostulated with them by his Prophets; sometimes he sent this and the other scourge to humble them; sometimes he gave them into the hands of their enemies to reduce their pride and obstinacy. So other Nations may expect to be tried and humbled for their Sins, though not, it may be, in the very same instances, yet upon the very same principles, God's love of righteousness, and abhorrence of wickedness. Those that are like them in their sins may expect to resemble them in their sufferings, or that they shall suffer for their Sins. We see when all methods of reforming this people failed; when their wickedness and contempt of God came to its height, they were warned no more, they were spared no longer; they were utterly rejected, and their nation is dispersed over the face of the earth.

earth. From hence all other nations might learn this instruction, that tho' God bears long he will not bear always. When the old world was proof against remedies, they were all cut off from the face of the earth, except *Noah* and his family.

Though God did not so particularly manifest himself to other nations, yet he did not leave himself without witness of the same remunerating providence. The *Persian*, the *Grecian*, the *Roman* monarchies have had their rise and ruin. But then it must be observed, that luxury and vice made way for their overthrow. The *Romans* in particular lost their virtue before they lost their power. This is the fourth kingdom in the vision of the prophetick image², that was strong as iron, so long as the ancient discipline and virtue lasted; but as the feet of that image were partly iron, and partly clay, (as the *Romans* fell into a dissolution of manners) they were easily broken; and being composed of things, that did not well unite, were unable, upon any shock, to sustain the ponderous weight of Empire.

There is another Empire since risen up, *divers from all others*, in constitution and appearance; as wide in extent, and more formidable in power, *it shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces*². This is generally expounded of that spiritual tyranny, that church power, which the Pope has usurped in the Christian world, and which has exceeded every thing in vice, hypocrisy, and cruelty. It has stood long; but, thanks be to God, its proud dominion has been visibly upon the decline. This *Babylon* is fallen in prophecy, her coming plagues are wonderful, and we are waiting for the time, when it shall be said, she is fallen in history.

However,

¹ Dan. ii.

² Dan. vii. 23.

However, we should consider that God may scourge us, and other nations by this very power before that time comes. Nothing but our national repentance and reformation can give us the hope of security from this hated tyranny. Without this we have reason to fear that this is the very power that will humble and break us. A power so vigilant and industrious, that it sends its thousands of emissaries amongst us, to wear all shapes, and incorporate themselves with all bodies of men, and with all denominations of Christians, to surprize the ignorant, and prepare the dissolute for rebellion and murder. A power that has often attempted our ruin, and very lately we were alarm'd at its bold progress.

Upon the whole, if God's moral government of the world; if the natural tendency of things; if the constant experience of mankind carry any proof and evidence with them, it is certain, that virtue must be the basis of publick happiness. It not only derives upon those who practice it, the blessings of providence; but is the natural means for acquiring peace and prosperity.—I come to the

III^d general head, *viz.* To observe what motive is offered here to engage us to act on this principle; namely, that it will prevent our reproach. Sin is the reproach of any people. It is scandalous in its appearance, and destructive in its influences: productive of weakness, timidity, jealousies, factions, disorders, and in the end ruin, and can any thing bring greater reproach to a people? Reproach stands here in opposition to exaltation, and therefore must be explained in a quite different sense. If virtue is our exaltation, sin must be our depression; the one the source of happiness,

ness, the other of waste and misery; the one our establishment, the other our ruin.

I need not labour much to give you an idea of ruin, when you have had so lately the frightful prospect before you. The impression cannot be yet razed out of your minds, when you trembled for yourselves and your country; when a sad gloom spread itself upon every countenance, and our fears presaged the dreadful consequences of intestine war; when your imagination presented to you every scene of distress. A short recollection of those thoughts will give you the true force of this motive.

Think upon your advantages, your privileges, your distinguishing blessings, and that to be ruined is to lose all those: to lose your own comfort in them, and the pleasure of transmitting them to posterity. Indulge the thought till it shall awaken your vigilance, your resolution, your love of virtue; that you might guard against every future baneful influence, and give despair to those who are slaves both by disposition and principle.

We value ourselves upon our constitution, wherein there is such an happy temperature of power, and such an effectual legal security to our lives and properties. And must this be lost? — Yes, if our sins and our enemies prevail. The ruin of this will introduce an arbitrary absolute government, and the train of evils, which naturally attends it. A government that has no regard to law, but the will and pleasure of one man, who claims us as his property, just as we do our horses and oxen, to dispose of as he pleases. A mad scheme, and one would think could never be the production of rational creatures. Could one ever imagine that *right* should be pretended in this scheme, a divine right, an hereditary

hereditary right; and I know not what, when it is impossible that any man, and in any station, should have any right to do mischief^a. Could one imagine that a revelation from the fountain of equity and mercy should be produced in favour of tyranny; a character never once named in the Bible, but with abhorrence. A king, a prince, a ruler, a magistrate, are described in such manner, as to include the ends of their office, and as supposes them to pursue those ends. Change the character, and the Scripture gives not the least countenance to it. Yet this was the government our enemies design'd for us.

Liberty, the fairest flower in our Isle, secures every property from violence; leaves us to follow our own judgment and inclinations; and enjoy with quietness the fruit of our Labour. And must this be lost? — Yes, if our sins and our enemies prevail. The ruin of this will be attended with arbitrary edicts, suited more to the conveniences, and exigencies of state, than to publick utility; so that we should have nothing to call our own, till we had used and enjoyed it.

We

^a The supposition is violent and absurd, that either God or man should authorize any institution contrary to the fundamental rights of human nature and society; — that monsters, born to ravage and desolate mankind, should bear the least impress of Divine Authority and Majesty; — that pride, violence and misrule should be ever called the *Ordinance of God*. Such principles in politicks, are as shocking as transubstantiation in religion; and almost as contrary to sense, reason, and Scripture: contrary to the ORIGINAL CONTRACT, which necessarily subsists in all *States*, and produces reciprocal engagements. — A real contract, and not a mere phantom; tacitly implied in the nature of government, and openly expressed in the coronation-oath of princes. And yet those false, those slavish principles, excited the late ungrateful rebellion; particulrly *Hereditary Right*, which, had it been a true principle, would have prevented the STUARTS from ever wearing a crown. Vid. *Scotish histories*, and *Harrington's grounds and reasons of monarchy*, p. 25. &c.

We justly esteem the freedoms of friendship, where every topick may become the subject of conversation, and every man give his opinion with frankness and decency. And must this be lost? — Yes, if our sins and our enemies prevail. Absolute governments, where the crown and the church unite to make men slaves, will not suffer free discourses about Religion and Politicks. Spies will be placed upon all companies, the fear of rigorous tribunals divert mens thoughts from two of the most useful concerns in life, and of consequence the pleasures of conversation be so much the more contracted.

We glory in our extensive commerce and established credit, and can boast of our Merchants as one of the most useful, and respected bodies of men, not only in this nation, but the whole world ^b. We pursue the industrious scheme in this hope that all our acquisitions will be our own. And must this be lost?—Yes, if our sins and our enemies prevail. Credit must languish, where it has no support from law and equity; Property must sink, where a man shall be made rich or poor by an Edict; Trade must suffer, when men enter into it with perpetual fear and diffidence. This is the state of commerce in absolute governments, such as our enemies lately designed for us, after the model of *France* ^c.

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We

^b Witness their support of Publick Credit in a late conjuncture, when some Rebels in open arms were destroying their Country; and others in private schemes, and with equal parricide were attempting to distress her credit, and help forward a general confusion.

^c It ought to be remembered by *Britains*, that one way the late *King of France* took to supply his Exchequer, was by an Edict, or a command in writing signed by himself, to increase the value of *Louis d'Ors* from fourteen to sixteen *Livres*, by virtue of a new stamp, they were to receive This brought

We prize Religion as the richest jewel in our treasure; wherein we serve God in a voluntary and rational method of Devotion, and expect to be saved by Jesus Christ according to the terms prescribed in his own Gospel. And must this be lost?—Yes, corrupted, lost in the rubbish of superstition, folly, and idolatry; enervated, debased by the sopperies of Popery, expensive in their use, worth nothing in the end, but to confound the soul with darkness and delusion. Instead of worshipping God, we must worship the Priest; and instead of one Mediator have an hundred. What makes this ruin more dreadful is, that we shall be forced into this sink of corruption. It will not be matter of choice, but necessity; tremendous necessity! arising from confiscations, dungeons, chains, and all the horrors of *Inquisition*.

When the Scripture says that sin will be the reproach and ruin of a people, you ought to know what is included in that calamity. It is the loss of truth and integrity to our Religion; the loss of peace and happiness to our Country, the loss of every valuable interest and delightful object, which are dear to us, and worth a living for. What will move and engage us, if such reflections as those will not? What should be more the object of our fear and abhorrence than sin, which brings along with it temporal, as well as eternal ruin? If the apprehension of it lately made us tremble, our sober calm thoughts of it should make us wise.—Nothing remains on this subject but to make some

A P.

brought all the gold of the kingdom into his hands; but then it was provided by the same edict, that they should be paid out to the People again at twenty *Livres* each; by which means four *Livres* in twenty accrued to his most Christian, excellent, and equitable Majesty.

Vid. Freeholder. No. 18.

APPLICATION

of it. If Religion and Virtue naturally tend to promote Publick Happiness, this truth will, I think, lead us to the following reflections.

1.) From hence it will follow that Christianity deserves the countenance and protection of civil states, because it encourages and enforces in the strongest manner, moral goodness.

I don't say that they are obliged to incorporate Christianity with civil government. They have different objects and motives; they are really different Kingdoms, *one* of this world, designed to secure temporal interests, and is supported by present rewards and punishments; the *other* is *not of this world*^a, designed to promote our eternal interest, and is supported by eternal rewards and punishments. They have different rulers to whom obedience is due, the one *Cæsar*, the other *Christ*; and those have separate and distinct rights, and therefore we are not to mingle and confound one with the other. *Render unto Cæsar, the things which are Cæsars, and unto God the things which are Gods*^e. I cannot yet see, that the magistrates power extends beyond the temporal interests of Society. Speculative opinions, which have no influence upon those; the affairs of conscience, which lie between God and a man's own soul; his concerns in a future state, which is a personal affair, and in itself unalienable, what has the magistrate to do with them? He can maintain publick peace, order, truth, justice without intermeddling with them. The experiment has been tried amongst us, and found to succeed; and we never had better times, than

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when

^a John xviii. 36.

^e Matt. xxii. 21.

when men were restrained from worrying and persecuting one another on those accounts.

If some think the magistrate has a power to persecute men for religious principles, I think they ought to allow, that they should in the first place do, as one of *Socrates's* enemies did, when he got into the government, *make a law against the art of reasoning*^f, then they would be consistent. Or we may justly demand of them in the next place, that they shall not lead us into mistakes, and give us good security, that should they misguide us, we shall not suffer for it in the last day, when we come to give up our account to the judge of all the world. If nothing of this can be done, every man may well claim a right of enjoying the undisturbed freedom of his religion.

Christianity inculcates all that honour, respect, and obedience, which are due to magistrates; but Christianity came to make no alteration in mens civil rights. *Man, who made me a judge, or divider over you*^g, was a passage of our Saviour's life, which deserved imitation as well as some others. Christianity subsisted separate and distinct from civil establishments for the first three hundred years, and, during that period, it was most remarkable for its purity, simplicity, and divine authority. Then it began to be corrupted; then to be the subject of great animosities and contentions, when it became united with civil constitutions; and the motives of riches, robes, and dominion had greater influence, than doing good, or receiving a crown of glory^h.

When

^f καὶ ἐν τοῖς νόμοις ἐγραφε, λόγον τέχνην μὴ διδάσκειν.
Xen. memorab. i. 31.

^g Luke xii. 14.

^h Christian Bishops, after they came to have a share of court favour, and temporal power, grew so proud, turbulent,

When the Church of God was in affliction, it was prophesied, *Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers*ⁱ. Not that they should become of the Church; but protect it, and restore it to freedom and tranquility. This was more immediately verified in the signal favours shewn to the *Jews* by *Cyrus*, *Artaxerxes*, and other *Persian* Monarchs; and by *Esther* one of their Queens, who saved the *Jewish* Nation from absolute destruction.

However, Christianity will deserve the protection of states, as it contains nothing destructive to the foundation of society: rather what will render them the firmer. What I mean is, that it patronizes moral goodness, and takes it into its very frame and substance. It appears in that character of holiness, which it so much insists on. This it commands by all its authority; this it enforces by all its sanctions; this it binds upon the conscience, and renders a real and inward principle of action: and consequently it carries matters further than laws can. If the appearance

lent, and factious, that first they excited Princes to persecute the Heathens; then one another; and afterwards were able to contend with Princes themselves. "By their management, *says an ingenious author*, they had so destroyed that peace, love und charity from among them, which the Gospel was given to promote; and instead thereof continually provoked each other to that malice, rancour, and every evil work, that they had lost the whole substance of their religion, while they thus eagerly contended for their own imaginations concerning it; and in a manner, quite drove Christianity out of the world, by those very controversies in which they disputed with each other about it. In these dark ages it was, that most of those superstitions and corruptions, we now justly abhor in the Church of *Rome*, were not only broached, but established; which gave great advantages to the propagation of Mohammedism."

Sale's Koran. Prelim. Sect. 2.

ⁱ Isai. xlix. 23.

rance be regular, and the outward deportment conformable ; just and peaceable, the law, the ends of society require no more, whatever men's inward principles and motives are. Christianity forms the heart to virtue, and enjoins *subjection to the higher powers, not only for wrath, but conscience sake* ^k.

All this will be strengthened by real Christianity, by men's being, what they pretend to be, real Christians. The greater value they have for this, the greater experience of its truth, excellency, and power ; the better subjects, neighbours and friends ; they will certainly be. The pleasure they find in the one, will incline and prompt them to their duty in the other.

The person that feels the engaging motives of Christianity, that rejoices in the covenant of grace, its noble privileges, and promises ; that honours Christ as the *Prince of Peace*, and depends upon him, the mediator, and only ground of our acceptance with God ; that believes his doctrine, follows his example, and looks to him as the author of justification and life ; the final judge both of quick and dead : that person, I say, will with chearful affection and zeal observe all institutions and laws designed for the temporal happiness of mankind. The benevolence which his religion breathes will inspire him with every kind disposition, and curb the sallies of turbulent passions, which so often occasion publick disorders. Christianity therefore, tho' diversified by some accidents and circumstances, will deserve publick protection ; and its professors ought to be restrained from injuring one another, on account of their differences, in conservation of the publick peace. I shall add no more to this head, but to observe, that, on this subject, we must distinguish

^k Rom. xiii. 1. 5.

distinguish between what is essential or necessary to human society ; and that which is an aid, motive and help to what is so. The first is the magistrates care ; the second the constant object of persecution.

2.) This shews that pernicious error to have no foundation, which affirms, *that private vices are publick benefits*. The nature of things, and the God of nature are both against it, as you have heard. And if, upon a comparison, the mischiefs which attend vice exceed its benefits, in all reason it ought to be condemned as a pernicious thing : for instance,

Drunkennes may possibly contribute to the publick revenue ; but then it weakens human nature, and if it becomes general, must emasculate the *British* race ; render men idle, and negligent of family affairs : and besides be the occasion of many hurtful contentions. Those evils exceed any pretended benefit.

The expences of *whoredom* may procure some advantages to trade ; but then it destroys that *sophy*¹, that parental affection so necessary to the care of families ; it renders men less human and tender of the publick welfare, than those, who confine themselves to lawful love, and have planted a stake in the hedge of the community.

Luxury,

¹ St. Paul describes the corrupt state of the *old Romans* in the blackest colours : of that people, who very soon after lost all pretensions to liberty and glory, *Rom. i. 24---32*. He calls them *ἀσώγους* without natural affection, so greatly depraved as to suppress the most powerful instinct of human nature, *that love which men bear to their offspring*. Well might the bands of society give way, when the ties of nature were broken. Very justly was that liberty destroyed, which ended in such a vile prostitution, as sunk men below the brutes. These are for our admonition, and teach us that those pleasures,

Luxury, by which I mean such expences in dress, equipage, entertainments and pleasure, as exceed our incomes^m; *luxury*, I say, may promote a consumption of manufactures, and employ many hands. But then it can only be for a time, unless we suppose the funds of luxury inexhausted. To the whole society this can be no increase of happiness; for as some grow rich by this means, others grow poor: Property consequently has only changed hands, and not really increased its quantity. Add to all this the contentions, strife, violence, effeminacy, and distempers which result from those vices, and we cannot suppose all their benefits can make any tolerable amends for the injury they do societyⁿ.

Vice has sometimes promoted a brisk circulation of trade; must we therefore establish this as a general rule, *that private vices are publick benefits*? Might we not as justly argue, that, because a fever has sometimes mended the constitution, therefore men should throw themselves into a fever, to repair the decays of nature? Might we not reason with equal force, that smuggling, piracy, and robbery contribute in some measure to

a
fures, which impoverish families, and make children beggars, lead to the same inhumanity.

^m *Messe tenuis propriâ vive*—*Live according to your income* is a maxim, which no man ought to dispense with, who really intends the increase of his fortune.

Perf. Sat. 6. 25.

ⁿ Non his juvenus orta parentibus
Infecit æquor Sanguine Punico;
Pyrrhumque, et ingentem cecidit
Antiochum, Hannibalemque dirum:

Sed rusticorum mascula militum
Proles, Sabellis docta ligonibus
Versare glebas, et Severæ
Matris ad arbitrium recisos.

Portare fustes; &c. —

Hor. Od. III. 33.

a circulation of business, therefore they are lawful and for the publick benefit, when the damage they procure to fair trade is inexpressible? We might with equal propriety make a panegyrick upon a whirlwind or a tempest, (sent for the correction of mankind) and celebrate it as a publick benefit, because it employs many hands in repairing the damages, sustained by it. But,

3.) Hence it follows to be the magistrates duty to punish all immoralities. They are the guardians of the state, to suppress every rising mischief, and maintain equity, peace, and order. They are invested with power and authority for this very end. *Rulers, i. e. those who answer the end of their institution, and perform the duties of their office, are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.*—*He is the minister of God to thee for good: but if thou doest that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil.*

It were to be wished indeed that all men were virtuously inclined; and so convinced of the excellency and benefit of this course, that they might be led to the practice of it from their own motives. But human nature is not in such perfection. Mens passions and lusts need a strong restraint, and vice of every kind should be punished with such exemplary severity, as to discourage the commission, and keep men within the bounds of a decent temperance.

The more virtue is encouraged, and vice punished, the easier will magistrates render their station, secure their authority, and multiply the blessings of their government.

F

4.)

4.) It concerns every one in a private station to cherish virtue ; by which means, if what has been said is true, we shall prove ourselves the heartiest friends to our Country. We see what corruptions prevail ; what ruins luxury and vice procure to private families ; how much the pleasure has encroached upon the business of life. If we are convinced of the bad tendency of those things, let us restore the ancient discipline, and retrieve the credit of a plain, solid, and substantial Virtue.

The consequence of this would be, that our ancient glory would shine and triumph ; courage and conduct be equal to publick commands ; Fidelity appear at the head of our expeditions ; and the honour of the nation never fall a sacrifice to the pride and pique of faction. Then neither friendship nor money would be thought an equivalent to merit ; nor the Commander and the Coward stand the same chance. Virtue will make men honest and brave, and when every one gave his countenance and approbation to it, we might expect a race of Heroes, whose gallant actions would adorn our future Annals.

5.) And *lastly* ; Repentance is necessary on account of those sins, which are our reproach, which provoke almighty God against us ; which all conspire to our ruin. I delight not in enumerating the sins of our day, it may look too much like invective : And as we have had many occasions of late for recollecting them, I might well excuse myself from the ungrateful task.

We are met this day upon a National account, and you see I have led your thoughts to National interests and concerns. Your duty as members

bers of Society will easily result from thence, but none more convincingly than that of Repentance and Reformation. A growing wickedness certainly portends destruction to a people. It will therefore be necessary, *in the first place*, to consider our State, and the probable issue of things to ourselves, our families, and our Country. Sin keeps its possession and thrives, from nothing so much as carelessness and stupidity of mind; a mind not used to reflect on the consequences of its own actions.

Repentance, *in the next place*, is our duty, not only sorrow for what is amiss, but the actual amendment of it. Take away this and it cannot be thought sincere. Popery will teach us another way of getting rid of our fear on account of sin, but then it is a delusive one. So many *Pater-nosters* and *ave Maries*; so many penances afflictive to the body; processions, indulgences, or absolutions will effect the business, without any change in the moral temper. But Christianity admits of no repentance unto life, but what appears in the life; but what is attended with *fruits meet for repentance*. We are concerned therefore to give the most proper evidences of a change; *to rend our hearts and not our garments*; to offer real effects of conviction, and not mere outward forms. In short, we are obliged to put away all the *Scandals* of our Country and Religion; every accursed thing from the midst of us. The same light that discovers our errors and miscarriages, obliges us to be sorry for them; *to cease to do evil and learn to do well*. For can any thing be more unreasonable than for a man to know his errors, and not think himself obliged, under such a conviction, to forsake them?

If we look back to what is past, we shall find various events inviting us to reformation. Great mercies and deliverances: severe rebukes and dark prospects, dark even as the shadow of death, and should not those dispose us? If none of our means and opportunities engage us, must we not expect a severe doom at last? The longer we have been tried; the oftener we have been warn'd and delivered, the less space certainly remains to us. If none of those things have made us wiser and better, we must look for *a more remarkable crisis*, than any we have yet seen. Our vices have sufficiently procured our weakness and reproach; but thanks be to God not yet our ruin. And yet his hand is still against us, and threatens *to cut off the herd from the stall*. *When his judgments are abroad in the earth, it becomes us to learn righteousness.*

Wherefore from the highest to the lowest let us amend our ways, cherish and encourage virtue: and frown upon every instance of vice and immorality.

Let us do it for our own sakes, that we might see good days, and end them in peace and tranquillity.

Let us do it for the sake of our Posterity, the image of our nature, and heirs of our fortune: that we may be built up for generations to come. Our examples will have the greatest influence upon them. We may possibly allow ourselves in some freedoms, and at the same time preserve a consciousness of our innocence in them; but we do well to consider, that our *young friends* are judges of our examples; but not of our innocence.

Let us do it for the sake of our country. We have advantages and blessings beyond others; shall

shall we sin them away, pull down the pillars of liberty, and lay our fences open to the invader or the rebel?

Let us do it, *finally*, for the sake of our invaluable religion, that this token of the divine presence and favour might continue with us. Its high authority obliges us, its blessings invite us; faith, hope, and charity, all unite their efforts to procure it. If the prospect of temporal ruin will not move us, yet methinks that of eternal ruin should; for our personal actions will be subject to the examination and sentence of the last, the great tribunal.

To our repentance let us add our prayers for every divine blessing. Let us pray for the peace of our *Jerusalem*, and the protection of the *British* throne. Princes have need of our prayers, that they might sustain the cares of government, and be always enabled to make a right use of their authority and power. Princes can do a great deal towards embarrassing our affairs, and hazarding our constitution. And since we have a King on the throne, who deserves so much of all his subjects, whose right is unquestionable, whose reign is without violence; who is wise, honest, brave, the Father of his people, we are bound in interest and gratitude to offer our most fervent prayers for a blessing on his person, his family, his councils, and his arms.

To our repentance and prayers let us add our charity to the poor; *break off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor, that it might be a lengthening out of our tranquility* ^P. So it becomes us to act, to imitate that mercy, we come to ask for ourselves.

Now,

to Him, by whom nations rise and fall—
to Him, by whom kings reign, and princes de-
cree justice—to Him the source, the protector
both of private and publick happiness; be glory,
dominion, and praise for ever. *Amen.*

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By the same Author.

THE principles of liberty asserted, and the abuse of
them, disclaimed: an ordination sermon, Sept. 26,
1738.

2. Reflections on human life: a charity sermon, Jan. 1,
1743.

3. God's promises the comfort and security of his people in
times of danger: a sermon during the late progress of rebel-
lion, Oct. 30. 1745.

4. The death of ministers considered and improved, on
occasion of Dr. Wright's death, April 20. 1746.

5. National gratitude due, for national mercies: a thank-
giving sermon, Oct. 9. 1746.

Sold by J. Noon, at the white Hart, Cheap-side.

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